

Message Text

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ACTION SCSE-00

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FM AMCONSUL MAZATLAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1009
INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

UNCLAS MAZATLAN 0538

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CASC, MX
SUBJ: W/W: RECURRING ASSAULTS ON INTERNATIONAL HIGHWAY, SINALOA

REF: MAZATLAN'S 243, 284, 303, 314, 315, 421, 423, 462, 494,
525, 536, MAZ. A-10, A-11, A-16 AND CLARK-POWERS TELCON,
DECEMBER 21, 1976.

1. ABOVE-REFERENCED TELEGRAMS PROVIDE ALL DETAILS ASSAULTS
REPORTED DEPARTMENT FROM MAY 1 THROUGH DECEMBER 21, 1976.

2. UNREPORTED INCIDENTS INCLUDE FOLLOWING: (1) JAN WEBER, WIFE,
10 YEAR OLD SON, U.S. LEGAL RESIDENTS, WERE FIRED UPON IN THEIR
VOLKSWAGEN CAMPER AND ORDERED TO STOP BY SIX HEAVILY ARMED
MEXICAN BANDITS ON INTERNATIONAL HIGHWAY NEAR MAZATLAN ON JUNE 21.
THE BANDITS KIDNAPPED THEM IN THEIR OWN AUTOMOBILE AND DROVE THEM
TO MOUNTAIN HIDEOUT WHERE THEY WERE QUOTE BADLY MISTREATED UNQUOTE.
THEY WERE SUBSEQUENTLY ROBBED OF THEIR VEHICLE AND ALL POSSESSIONS
AND RELEASED. WZBER FAMILY RETURNED TO MAZATLN WHERE THEY WERE
SHELTERED AND FINALLY REPATRIATED BY THE AMERICAN LEGION. (2) ON
DEC. 2, 1976 EMBASSY RSO ROCHE TELEPHONED CONSUL TO ADVISE THAT A
MEXICAN CITIZEN, MR. NIDER, HAD BEEN FIRED UPON ON THE INTERNATIONAL
HIGHWAY AT KM 1530 (NEAR CULIACAN).# HE SUCCEEDED IN ELUDING THE
FOUR MACHINE GUN ARMED BANDITS AND PROCEEDED TO THE FIRST GAS
STATION, WHERE HE WAITED TO SEE IF THE CALIFORNIA LICENSED VEHICLE
TRAVELLING BEHIND HIM HAD ALSO GOTTEN THROUGH THE BLOCKADE. AFTER
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WAITING A COUPLE OF HOURS AT THE FILLING STATION AND NOTING THE
VEHICLE DID NOT PASS, HE CONTINUED HIS TRIP. MR. NIDER SUBSEQUENTLY
REPORTED INCIDENT TO MR. ROCHE, WHO ASKED CONSUL TO INVESTIGATE;
ACTING ON INFORMATION PROVIDED BY CONSUL, CHIEF OF THE STATE JUDICIAL
POLICE, CONDUCTED INVESTIGATION BUT TO DATE, NOTHING HAS TURNED UP.
(2) ON OCTOBER 12, 1976, AN ALLEGED AMERICAN CITIZEN MANUEL ARAUJO,

REPORTED TO CONSULATE THAT HE HAD BEEN ASSAULTED SIXTY-THREE KILOMETERS NORTH OF MAZATLAN AND HAD BEEN ROBBED OF ALL BELONGINGS INCLUDING VEHICLE. IN RESPONSE TO OUR MANY APPEALS FOR PROTECTION, CULIACAN POLICE CHIEF INFORMED CONSULATE THAT MANY MEXICAN CITIZENS ARE ALSO BEING ASSAULTED, INCLUDING BUS DRIVERS, TRUCK DRIVERS. AND TOURISTS.

3. IN ADDITION TO DIRECT ASSAULTS, TWO AMERICANS ARE LISTED AS MISSING AND MAY BE VICTIMS OF THESE ASSAULTS. (1) LT. COL. FRED A. BACHER WAS DUE TO ARRIVE SAN BLAS, NAYARIT BY AUTOMOBILE ON DECEMBER 1 AND DID NOT SHOW UP. HIS WIFE HAS REPORTED TO CONSULATE THAT EIGHTEEN HUNDRED DOLLARS IN TRAVELERS' CHECKS THAT BACHER PURCHASED PRIOR TO HIS TRIP WERE CASHED AT A CULIACAN BANK ON DECEMBER 2. THE LARGE TRAVELERS' CHECK TRANSACTION HAS BEEN REPORTED TO THE CHIEF OF THE CULIACAN POLICE, WHO IS NOW INVESTIGATING. (2) ERNESTO GARCIA DEPARTED CALIFORNIA DECEMBER 5, ENTERED MEXICO ON DECEMBER 6 HEADED SOUTH ON INTERNATIONAL HIGHWAY IN 1972 FORD GALAXY AND HAS NOT BEEN HEARD FROM SINCE.

4. AS REPORTED IN MAZATLAN'S 475, THE GOVERNOR OF CULIACAN APPEALED TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL FOR HELP IN WHAT HE TERMED AN OUT-OF-HAND CRIME SITUATION. OUR CHECK WITH MILITARY AUTHORITIES REVEALED THAT THE ROADS, PARTICULARLY THE INTERNATIONAL HIGHWAY IN SINALOA AND SONORA, ARE NOW BEING ACTIVELY PATROLLED BY ARMY CONTINGENTS. CONSUL HAS ON MANY OCCASIONS APPEALED TO POLICE AND TOURISM AUTHORITIES IN CULIACAN AND MAZATLAN TO ATTEMPT CURB THESE CRIMINAL ASSAULTS BECAUSE OF ADVERSE EFFECTS ON TOURISM. CONSUL ALSO STRESSED THAT ONE LIFE HAD ALREADY BEEN LOST WITH POTENTIAL FOR MORE LOSSES IF VICTIMS RESIST.

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5. AUTHORITIES IN CULIACAN WELL AWARE PROPORTIONS CRIME SITUATION HAS REACHED IN SINALOA AS DESCRIBED IN ARTICLE IN EL SOL DE DURANGO, DECEMBER 21, IN WHICH CHIEF OF POLICE STATED QUOTE WE LIVE IN A STATE OF PERMANENT CIVIL WAR; WE ARE AT THE EDGE OF HELL UNQUOTE. HE ADDED THAT ALTHOUGH HIS OFFICERS ARE ARMED TO THE TEETH, NOT A SINGLE PERSON HAS BEEN APPREHENDED FOR 543 MACHINE GUN MURDERS WHICH OCCURRED IN CULIACAN DURING THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS. HE INDICATED THAT THE DRUG TRAFFICKERS PUT OUT CONTRACTS ON PEOPLE AND THAT SOMETIMES INNOCENT PEOPLE ARE ASSASSINATED EITHER BY MISTAKE OR BY BEING CAUGHT IN THE CROSS-FIRE. HE COMMENTED THAT CULIACAN'S WAVE OF VIOLENCE IS DUE TO THE CITY'S BEING A CONTINENTAL BASE OF OPERATIONS FOR DRUG TRAFFICKERS AND THAT IN CULIACAN THE BULLET IS WHAT COUNTS.

COMMENT: ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL GRAPE VINE, THE LAST TWO ASSAULTS HAVE BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO THE SAME BANDITS INVOLVED IN SEVERAL PREVIOUS ASSAULTS YET THE AUTHORITIES ARE UNABLE TO TRACE ANY OF THE STOLEN VEHICLES NOR THE IDENTITY OF THE BANDITS.

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